



Reformation Lutheran Church

**“Come and See, Learn and Rejoice, Go and Tell!”
August 2023**

“But she came and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ And he answered, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ She said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed instantly.” -Matthew 15:25-28

It seems out of character that Jesus would turn a desperate woman away simply because she was a Gentile. However, since Jesus had not yet died, the old covenant was still in force. According to this covenant, God would bless Israel first and would then bless the other nations through Israel. In other words, Israel would get the bread while the other nations received the crumbs. Since this covenant was still in force, the Canaanite woman would have to accept its terms.

Nevertheless, the Canaanite woman pushed forward with a strong faith. In fact, Jesus initially resisted her to draw her faith out. This allowed him to see her faith. It allowed his disciples to see her faith. And it also allowed her to see her own faith.

Moreover, her faith was not just strong, but bold. So bold, in fact, that the Canaanite woman held Jesus to his own words and compelled him to act. To paraphrase her reasoning, “Yes, Jesus, your words are true; we are dogs. But by your very words you have to help me, for even dogs get the crumbs from the table.” She humbled herself, and accepted the terms of the old covenant, but then asserted these terms forcefully, and was blessed. There is a lesson here. We are beggars before God and have no leverage, except when we hold him to his own word. The Canaanite woman did this, and Jesus praised her faith!

Finally, this woman’s faith pointed beyond itself. She was a sign of the coming salvation of the Gentiles. The Kingdom of God was about to go worldwide. With Jesus’ death the temple curtain would be torn in two. The barrier between God and humanity would vanish, and God would be worshipped everywhere, not just in Jerusalem. In other words, the Gentile nations were about to sit at God’s table and get the bread, not just the crumbs.

So we should be thankful that salvation has come to Gentiles like us. Because Christ died for our sins and rose for our justification, we are now included in God’s covenant. We are now the Israel of God! And this means that we are God’s people, that we have God’s promises, and that we will inherit the earth.

Because of Jesus, we no longer receive crumbs from God’s table but the very Bread of Life. And this Bread is Christ himself.

Pr.

August already. Sigh. For many of us, it’s back to school time. I’m not sure I’m ready, but here we go. Please pray for all our students and teachers as we begin a new school year. These precious children are our future, and some days the weight of being a teacher/counselor/parent figure/caregiver is very heavy. Today’s world is hard on kids and very demanding of them and us. We need God’s presence to be felt in our schools and his hand of care and support over us all. Peace be with you, Gabi



August 7th – Amy Becker

August 7th – Bobbie Golden

August 8th – Gabi Owen

AUGUST CALENDAR

Sunday – August 6th – Service – 10:30 a.m.

Sunday – August 13th – Service – 10:30 a.m.; Council after service

Sunday – August 20th – Service – 10:30 a.m.

Saturday – August 26th – Clean-up Day – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday – August 27th – Service – 10:30 a.m.

| | <u>August 6</u> | <u>August 13</u> | <u>August 20</u> | <u>August 27</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Altar Guild | Wayne | Carolyn | Junior | Tammy |
| Usher | Junior | Carolyn | Wayne | Junior |
| Lector | Junior | Tammy | Amy | Chuck |
| Sermon | Chuck | Pastor | Pastor | Pastor |
| Thrive | Gabi | Pastor | Wayne | Gabi |
| Oaks | Chuck | | | Chuck |

Fellowship: We’ve certainly been the after service snackers lately, haven’t we! It’s been great! I do, however, suggest that we choose one Sunday a month to celebrate all the birthdays for that month. I think it will make it easier for everyone who wishes to provide snacks and such. (I’ll still make myself eat snacks brought any other time though, just saying.) 😊

Property: Our August clean-up day will be Saturday, the 26th, 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are always welcome!

Education: We have enjoyed learning about the differences between Lutheranism and other Christian religions around the world. Join us in the fall as we study the topic of spiritual warfare.

Worship and Music: We continue in the season of Trinity where we will be for nearly 3 more months.

We will begin our Bible class in September. It will be based on the book, *The Sword and The Mask – Building an Antifragile Approach to Spiritual Warfare* by The Rev. Dr. Jon C. Furgeson. Also, a prerequisite for the class is to read or listen to the YouTube audio of *This Present Darkness* by Frank Peretti.

At last week's church council meeting the council voted to continue purchasing *Portals of Prayer*. These contain 3 months of brief daily devotions. We have them on the table in the back of the sanctuary for anyone to pick up. Consider getting one for your own use or even to pass on to a friend. They might open the door to a new member.

How many of us really remember the "what does this mean" from our days in catechism class? Here is this month's review.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT – You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN – We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Mission and Ministry: Wayne is currently applying for a Thrivent card for us to buy food for the Focus Food Bank. We still have at least five other opportunities to use a Thrivent card this calendar year. Some suggestions have been House of Heroes, which Chuck is looking into, and a foster care home, The Village, that Gabi is looking into. All ideas are welcome!

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH "The Lutheran Fraternal Phenomenon"

A non-Lutheran mainline Christian was heard to declare, "I sure wish our denomination had a deal going like the Lutherans have." When pressed, she explained: "Those fraternal groups [North American Lutherans had two at the time] do amazing things for the church. Why didn't our church think of something like that?"

Members of our Lutheran congregations may be tempted to conclude that Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and its predecessors, Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood, were insurance companies created to corner a captive market (Lutherans). They'd be mistaken.

Lutherans haven't always had "mutual aid" societies. And when they created them, the idea wasn't so much to milk the Lutheran market with insurance sales, but rather to help Lutherans look out for one another. In fact, the original names adopted by these societies give no hint they were insurance companies at all.

The Iowa Synod (which later became part of the "old" American Lutheran Church) seems to have gone first. In 1879 convention delegates, sitting in the pews of St. John Lutheran Church, Maxfield Township (rural Denver, ten miles from Waverly) organized *Unterstützungs Verein*. Needless to say, the vote was taken in German. Later renamed Lutheran Mutual Aid Society, the company moved to Waverly, down the street from Wartburg College. Never a fraternal, the society survived for 105 years before giving up its Lutheran identity. (Today it's a firm providing insurance for members of credit unions.)

Two other attempts at providing "mutual aid" for Lutherans both became fraternal. (For more about what a "fraternal" is and does, keep reading.) Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) was one of these. It was created within the Lutheran Synodical Conference (no longer in existence) in Appleton, Wisconsin, in 1902. For nearly a century, the Aid Association (note the lack of "insurance" in the title) served German Lutherans, a large swath of whom belonged to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. One of the selling points for founding AAL was that, at the time, working class Lutherans couldn't find affordable insurance. AAL helped solve that problem.

Lutheran Brotherhood (LB) arrived next on the scene. Like AAL, LB was created as a fraternal, to provide mutual support in this case for Norwegian Lutherans. Like Lutheran Mutual, it was created by vote of delegates at a church convention. But the 1917 Minneapolis meeting that birthed it was contentious. Some delegates thought insurance might not be pleasing to God. (Perhaps it suggested to them a lack of trust in the Almighty during tough times.) So, the proponents described it as a "mutual aid society" and named it "Luther Union." The Union merged with the Lutheran Brotherhood of America in 1920. The latter group's name was adopted.

After a century of fierce competition, AAL and LB quietly merged in 2001. Under the new name, Thrivent, North American Lutherans found themselves with the largest fraternal benefit society in the U.S. So, what's a "fraternal benefit society," and why do Lutherans like having one of them? (Pardon the sexist language: "Fraternal" is a male term, but women are very much invested in this enterprise even though there was a time when AAL's male membership had to take a vote that finally allowed women to own policies!)

A fraternal benefit society enjoys special treatment under tax law. It's considered a nonprofit organization, functioning for the benefit of its members. In the case of AAL, LB and (now) Thrivent, the members are the owners of company shares (or certificates or insurance policies). But, in a broader sense, the members are all Lutherans. So, whether you own a financial stake in Thrivent or not, you as a Lutheran are a beneficiary.

How does that work? Under its charter, the fraternal provides financial support to its members. The Lutheran fraternal have historically done it in several ways. Lutheran groups (usually working through one of the fraternal's local branches) can launch a charitable project and receive matching funds from the fraternal. The project could be as local as helping a family pay its medical bills or a sponsoring fund-raiser to stock a food shelf. It could be as far-reaching as helping raise money for a Habitat for Humanity house or for Haiti earthquake relief.

Lutheran denominations have received thousands of dollars in fraternal support over the years. That means that many churchwide programs developed by ELCA, LCMS, WELS, or any other Lutheran judicatory can be-and have been through the years-underwritten with support from the fraternal society. Similar support has flowed over the years to Lutheran colleges, universities, seminaries, Bible camps, and a host of other Lutheran institutions.

“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”